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managing public lands for multiple use

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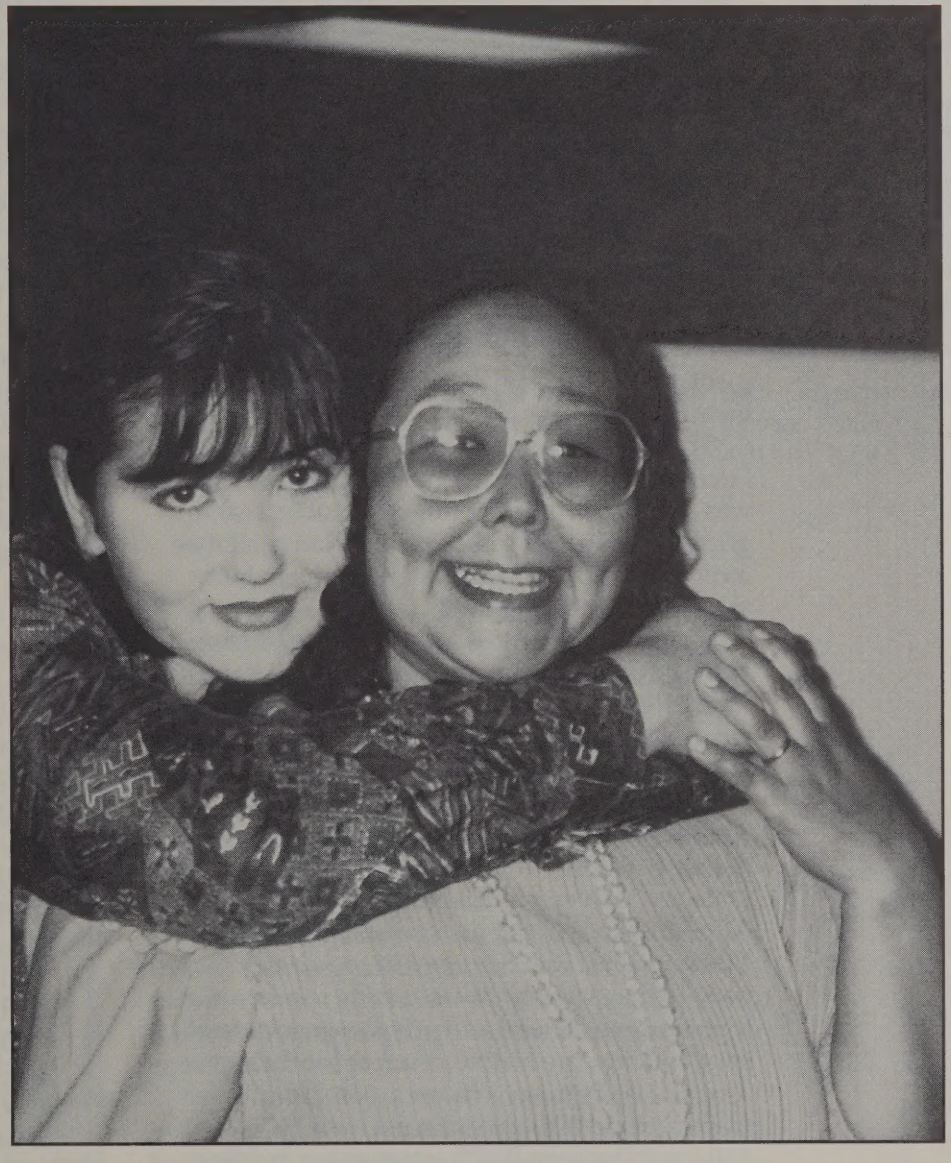


Teresa McPherson

Susan Joyce-Harvey and her daughter, Naomi, contributed almost 1,000 hours of volunteer work for BLM in 1994 and 1995. The volunteer program is a win-win proposition: volunteers put their skills to work and sometimes learn new ones, while BLM gets the job done for less.

u.s. department of the interior • bureau of land management

Like mother—like daughter

Susan Joyce-Harvey and her daughter Naomi contributed close to 1,000 hours of volunteer work for BLM in 1994 and 1995. Joyce-Harvey took official adjudicative action on 69 Native Allotment parcels, while Naomi, a high school sophomore, gave several hundred hours of clerical support to the BLM-Alaska's Conveyance Division.

Joyce-Harvey is Inupiat and Yupik Eskimo. She grew up in Emmonak and came to Anchorage with her family as a teenager. She says she feels especially pleased when her work helps a Native allottee receive entitlement to his or her allotment, "Mostly because I have lived out in the village and have seen how heavily people in the bush rely on the subsistence way of living to survive."

She explains that sometimes the area surrounding villages is refuge lands that may be closed to hunting activities. Individual allotments provide a legal place for the allottees to hunt or fish.

"When I was growing up, the only way our family had protein-rich food was if my father was able to catch fish or hunt for moose, seal, geese or whale. So I associate the Native allottee receiving his or her certificate with their ability to provide for their families."

Joyce-Harvey worked for the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Indian Affairs until 1986 when she resigned from federal service. She came back to BLM as a volunteer in March 1994, and contributed over 600 hours of volunteer service as an experienced adjudicator. She was reinstated as a part-time BLM employee in October 1994.

Naomi Harvey participated in the Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students during 1994 and 1995. RAPS is a public, non-profit partnership that actively involves rural communities, schools, state, federal and private agencies to engage and educate Native youth about their environment and careers in natural resource management. Naomi continued with BLM as a volunteer between RAPS assignments, helping prepare the documentation for five Native Allotment packages adjudicated by her mother. After providing countless hours of clerical support to other adjudicators, Naomi left BLM in August to return to school.

—Teresa McPherson

BLM Director speaks on federal land legislation

BLM's Acting Director, Mike Dombeck, spoke recently before the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in Big Sky, Montana.

Dombeck objected vigorously to legislation that would transfer public lands out of the ownership and management of the United States to the individual States. The legislation is being sponsored by Sen. Craig Thomas (R-Wyo.) and Rep. Jim Hansen (R-Utah).

"The fundamental flaw of the Thomas and Hansen legislation," Dombeck said, "is that it would give away a precious national inheritance—the lands that remain from the original 1.8 billion acres of public domain.

"These lands now belong to all Americans, but the Thomas and Hansen bills would take away their ownership and give it to any and all States that want these lands. The States, in turn, could do whatever they wanted with the lands, including selling it to private interests."

Dombeck went on to say that the American people would get nothing for the transfer of the public lands that now belong to them. "The American taxpayer would not be compensated for the loss of revenue from the various commercial activities on the public lands, or for the loss of assets on these lands, or for the loss of the land itself."

Dombeck urged his listeners to carefully consider the Thomas and Hansen bills, and to conclude that "a transfer of the public lands would give away an extraordinary legacy that we have inherited from our fathers, and which we have a duty to pass on to our children."

—Janet Malone

After the fire's out...

Last year's deadly fire season has firefighters taking another look at safety

Seasonal workers who returned to the Alaska Fire Sevice this year noticed a pronounced emphasis on safety. Most attended four-hour refresher training courses and all have been reminded about the need to maintain safety.

Last year's fire season in the Lower 48 states, when 34 persons died in fire-related accidents, brought safety issues to the forefront. Several interagency and Bureau of Land Management reports reviewed the South Canyon fire in Colorado, where 14 firefighters were killed, and at the national fire and aviation program as a whole.

"We're using everything that comes out that lets us look at our operations to see if there's any way to fine-tune them," said Dave Dash, chief of fire operations.

The refresher course is required for everyone who has an operations rating on his or her red card. A "red card" is a standardized rating system listing a firefighter's qualifications through tests, training and experience. The refresher course is being given to crew bosses, fire suppression specialists, hot shot crews and safety officers. Alaska smokejumpers are implementing a similar program.

Dave Jandt, who was in charge of the safety course, said it teaches basic safety and how to use fire shelters, and reviews past accidents. The class hears about Standard Fire Orders; the Watch-Out Situations; the effects of fuels, weather and topography on fires; and how to recognize indicators of extreme fire behavior. They discuss the "LCES" of fire safety: lookouts, communications, escape routes and safety zones. "We talk about what to look for, what makes a good lookout, when to go 'back into the black' (the burned areas), and what is a good safety zone," Jandt said.

The class goes outside to erect fire shelters after watching a video in which a shelter is deployed in a 40-mile-an-hour wind. Next, they review several fire accidents, including the South Canyon fire. Jandt ends the course with a discussion of the Pothole Lake fire near Kenai in 1991, where firefighters were forced by flames into the burned area.

All training at AFS emphasizes safety. "Each course has an element where we talk about the dangers of that particular job and how to perform that job safely," said R.J. Hayes, chief of training.

Andy Williams

Smokejumpers land practice jumps. Seven smokejumpers completed rookie training at AFS this year, each taking 12 to 15 practice jumps. Returning smokejumpers also practiced jumping. The three pictured here were in the rookie "Class of 1990."

"The safety message is kind of shot through the whole course."

In addition, AFS has a strong overall safety training program under the guidance of Department of Interior, BLM, and Occupational Safety and Health Agency regulations. AFS safety manager Don Wahl says required courses cover topics such as hazardous materials, blood-borne pathogens, HIV/AIDS, first aid, CPR and driver safety.

Communications is an important safety element—making sure all people have the information they need. AFS is currently working to improve fire commanders' access to local weather information.

Dash said AFS is attuned to anything new that will contribute to worker safety. "We feel we have a good safety record," he said. "We feel pretty confident that we've addressed the major issues. There's always some tinkering on the margins that may produce big dividends, but we don't feel, based on our record, that we have major holes in our program on safety."

—Andy Williams

Britain's Young Explorers collect data for BLM

KJ Mushovic

Two students, part of a 96-member expedition from England, gather their gear together.

Two years ago, two British visitors stopped by the Glennallen District Office to ask if the Bureau of Land Management might use dozens of eager young students for a special summer research and training project. It was unlike any other proposal for a Special Recreation Use Permit ever received at the office. This summer, the vision became a reality!

Ninety-six expedition members of the British Schools Exploring Society arrived in Alaska in mid-July. The first three weeks of their expedition were spent working on data collection projects for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in the Nabesna area. The Young Explorers (YEs) collected information on trail accessibility, avian and wildlife habitats, and glaciers. "I was impressed by how extremely self-sufficient they were," says Russell Galipeau, chief of resources management for the Park.

In early August, the group relocated to BLM-managed lands, where they split into four groups, which rotated locations and activities every four to five days. One group was assigned to conduct trail inventory and data collection for BLM-managed trails in the Gulkana National Wild River corridor, the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District, and along the Denali and Richardson Highways. Meanwhile, their counterparts honed mountaineering skills on the Gulkana Glacier and rafting skills on the Nelchina River.

"It was the advice of BLM personnel that guided me toward the locations and activities during the second phase, for which I and the 96 others on the expedition are grateful," says Tony Whiting, chief leader of the Alaska Expedition.

"Alaska is a wonderful place, with wilderness of the kind BSES seeks, and with local support, which has been both positive and tremendous! In fact, one of the local landowners was putting up a no-trespassing sign yesterday (the day before caribou hunting season opened), but he told us we were welcome to stay there."

The British Schools Exploring Society (BSES) is an 85-year-old, United Kingdom-based, non-profit organization. Whiting explains, "The Society's expeditions aim to introduce young people to a remote part of the world, to carry out worthwhile scientific work, and to provide the young people with opportunities to develop personally and socially, through being exposed to challenging physical activities, and living and surviving in the bush for six weeks."

Youths from sixteen-and-a-half to twenty years of age, who are either in or between full-time education, apply annually in hopes of being selected for one of approximately 70 openings for an expedition. Those selected participate in the expedition as YEs. Upon successfully completing the expedition, the YEs become full members of the British Schools Exploring Society.

"We look for a wide variety of qualities in our applicants," explains Whiting. "Enthusiasm, determination, common sense, the ability to work as a member of a team, physical fitness, and a sense of humor are high on the list. The aim is not to select an elite group, but a team of youngsters who will both benefit from, and contribute to, the total experience."

Traditionally, Society expeditions have taken place in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions such as Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Spitzbergen and Canada, as well as Alaska. Over the past decade, expeditions to warmer climates such as Kenya, Papau, New Guinea, and India have led to the development of affiliated groups such as the Indian Youth Exploring Society and the Zimbabwe Schools Exploring Society. This year, expeditions were led to south east Iceland and north Australia, in addition to eastern Alaska.

Despite steady rain during most of their expedition, YEs had many positive reactions to their time in Alaska.

"A sow grizzly with two cubs came within 800 to 900 meters of us. I thought: 'You can't eat us, we're British!' Luckily, she took off," says one YE. "The river was at flood stage when we ran it—that was quite a thrill," recalls another.

The YEs encountered an incredible variety of creatures while performing their work, including the notable day of the grizzly sighting, which also included beaver, spawning salmon, howling wolves, caribou and a late-night camp visit from a moose.

"We were all 'kicked up' for the night and heard this noise outside the tent—I suppose we were all still a bit tense from the bear (they had encountered earlier). We were relieved when the moose passed on through," chuckles a YE.

"We were quite shocked by your maps," notes a YE while discussing the BLM trail project. "In England, the maps are available on a much larger scale. Fences—even individual trees—are marked! It was challenging to find and follow the trails on these maps. Often they (the trails) were not in the places they were shown."

"Many YEs are using their expedition experiences to qualify for standing in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme," comments Whiting. "There are bronze, silver and gold levels of status in that program, which involves demonstrating a wide variety of skills and services, from participating in worthy community services back home to learning techniques for living under testing conditions like the ones on this Alaska Expedition."

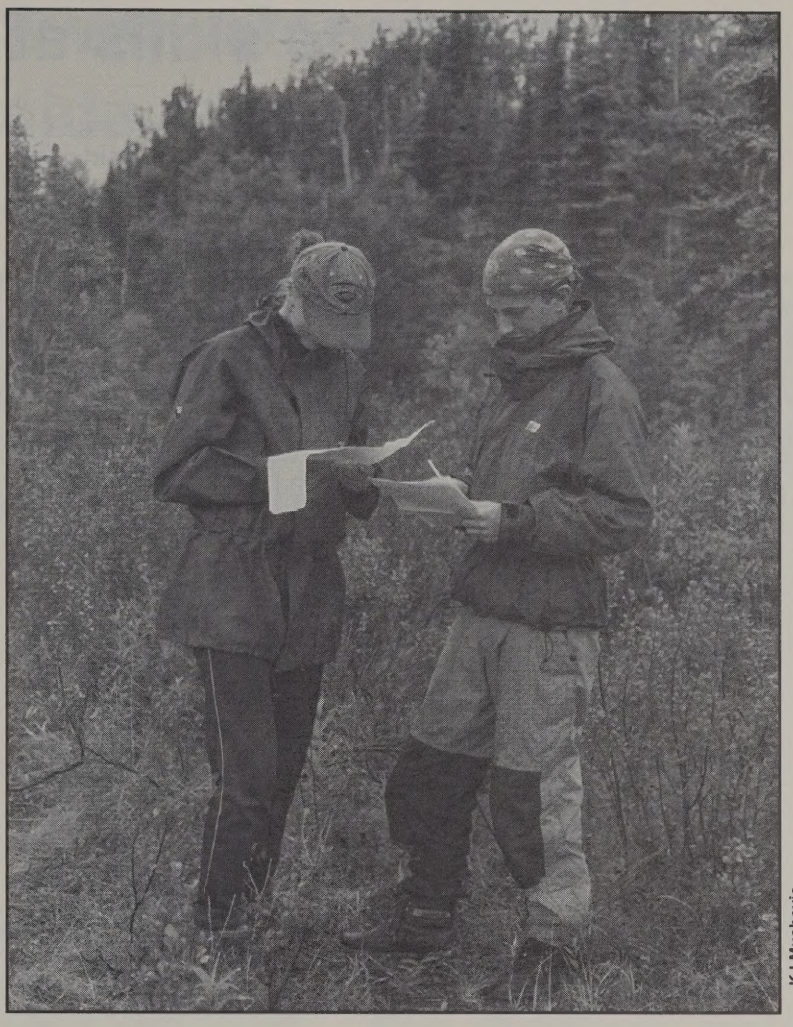
Whiting adds, "It is my experience that the young people grow in stature during their six weeks away from home and normal civilization. ... They mature in thought and deed, and benefit those back home by being more sensitive and considerate young adults."

Whiting has one regret, "No one from Alaska was part of the team this year, although I tried to encourage Alaskan young people and leaders to join the expedition. It is normal, however, for Young Explorers and Leaders from the host country to take part, as a number did in the summer of 1985 when the Society first visited Alaska."

Whiting is planning to return to the Copper River Basin with another expedition in two years' time, so look for the BSES again in 1997!

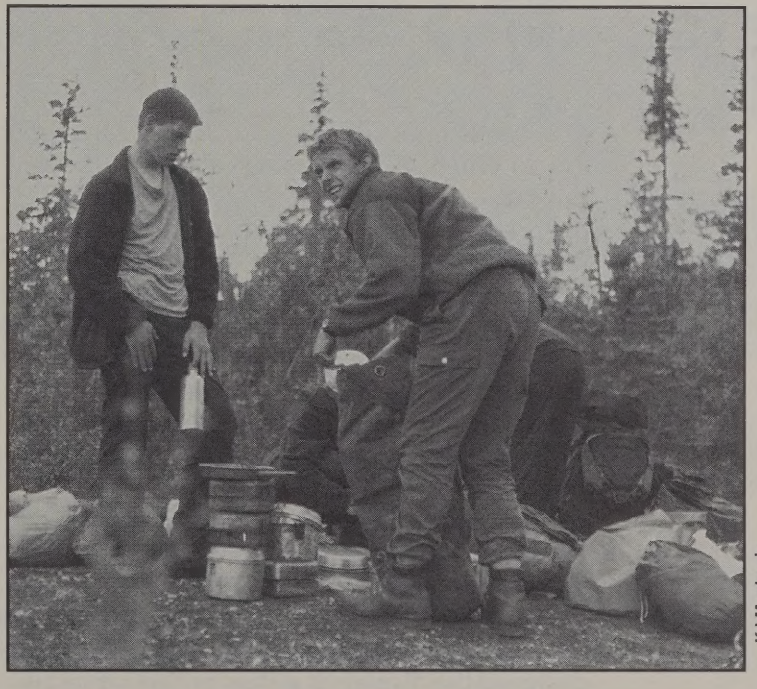
To find out more about the Society and future expeditions, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: The British Schools Exploring Society at the Royal Geographic Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London, SW7 2AR, United Kingdom.

—KJ Mushovic/Tony Whiting



KJ Mushovic

Two Young Explorers collect trail data for the BLM.

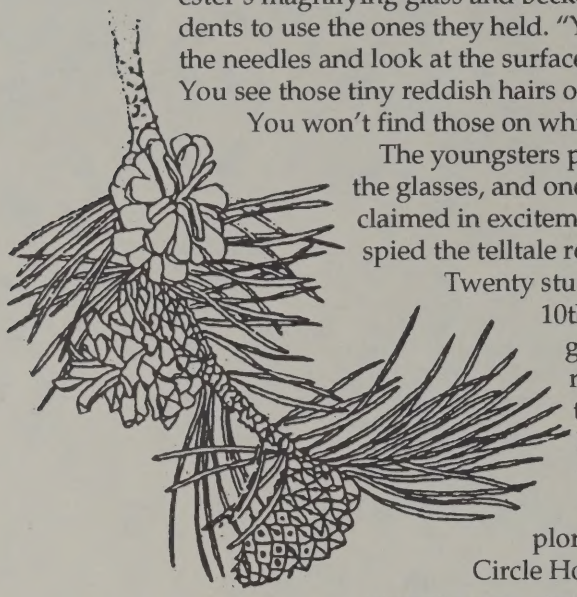


KJ Mushovic

A good part of each day was spent packing and unpacking camp gear.

Students hone skills at Earth Quest camp

"Who knows how to tell a black spruce from a white spruce?" Tony Gasbarro held a forester's magnifying glass and beckoned the students to use the ones they held. "You fold back the needles and look at the surface of the twig. You see those tiny reddish hairs on the stem? You won't find those on white spruce."



The youngsters peered through the glasses, and one by one, exclaimed in excitement as they spied the telltale red hairs.

Twenty students—9th, 10th and 11th-graders from rural areas—participated in Earth Quest, a wildlife and wildland exploration camp at Circle Hot Springs. The program was organized by a partnership of federal and state agencies, and Alaska Native organizations. Instructors from more than a dozen federal and state agencies and Native groups volunteered to teach about natural resources and public lands management.

Gasbarro, an extension forester with University of Alaska Fairbanks; Randi Jandt, wildlife biologist the BLM, and Jim Roessler, fire fuels management specialist with the BLM Alaska Fire Service, taught a section on fire and forestry.

The instructors showed the youths how to estimate the age of the trees and explained how forests come back from fire. They examined willows and found where moose had browsed on the stunted tips of shoulder-high branches. Lower down, where the snow level had been, they found where hares had nibbled.

Other day-long modules included fish and aquatic ecology, mining and geology, wildlife, and public lands management. Back at the hot springs, the students used problem-solving skills taught in an environmental dispute resolution course at UAF to prepare a fire management plan for a resource area.

The students learned about gold-mining techniques at a gold dredge on Coal Creek, 40 miles up the Yukon River from Circle, in the Yukon-Charley National Preserve site.

In addition to the instructors, BLM sponsored two students from the Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students in the program: Annette Donaldson of Delta and James Grant Holmberg of Fairbanks.

—Andy Williams

Anaktuvuk Pass honors Mesa Site display

Nestled in a valley in the Brooks Range, 280 miles north of Fairbanks, the village of Anaktuvuk Pass was jumping with excitement as residents and visitors celebrated the unveiling of a new museum display.

More than half of the residents in this village of 300 turned out for a ceremony at the Nunamiut School to hear guest speakers and celebrate the completion of the new Mesa Archaeological Site display to be installed in the Simon Paneak Memorial Museum in Anaktuvuk. Visitors from Barrow and Fairbanks also attended.

The Mesa Site display was designed by Vera Weber, a local resident and assistant curator of the museum. BLM staff in Fairbanks generated the display on computer, in consultation with Weber and museum director Grant Spearman. Weber designed the display as a class project while taking a museum exhibits class with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum.

The internationally known Mesa Site is north of the Brooks Range, about 120 miles northwest of Anaktuvuk Pass. Radiocarbon assays on charcoal from the ancient campfires indicate the site was used as long as 11,700 years ago, making it among the oldest Paleoindian sites in North America. During BLM excavations at the mesa, archaeologists have recovered stone projectile points that have been identified as Paleoindian in origin.

The 4-foot by 5-foot display chronicles the discovery of the Mesa Site, and explains how prehistoric hunters used the 200-foot-high mesa as a lookout while searching for game animals. To further explain hunting techniques, local high school student Ben Hopson III demonstrated how ancient hunters increased spear-throwing distance and power with the aid of an atlatl. Students carved atlatls in their school classes as a project for learning prehistoric hunting techniques.

—Sharon Durgan Wilson

Swiftwater rescue team aids rafter on Gulkana River

The Glennallen District's persistence in providing seasonal employees with Swiftwater Rescue training paid off again this year, when an emergency situation occurred on the Gulkana National Wild River.

A four-man crew consisting of seasonal and volunteer staff was stationed at the Canyon Rapids on the Gulkana River over the 4th of July weekend. The crew included veteran seasonal outdoor recreation planners Joe Westermeyer and Brad Seifert, and Student Conservation Association volunteers Jon Coulter and John Geiger.

On July 3, a large group of rafters made their way through Canyon Rapids. All went well until the last raft; small and heavily loaded, it became lodged sideways against a rock, and flipped over on the two occupants. Coulter, stationed at that segment of the rapids, immediately got his BLM throw bag out to the pair. Using the lifeline contained in the throw bag, Coulter swiftly guided them on to shore.

The crew then went to retrieve the capsized raft, which was stuck upside-down in mid-river. The raft had its own throw bag attached to the bow of the boat, where it was being utilized as a bow line. The raft's throw bag had gotten caught on a rock underwater, and was preventing the raft from floating downstream.

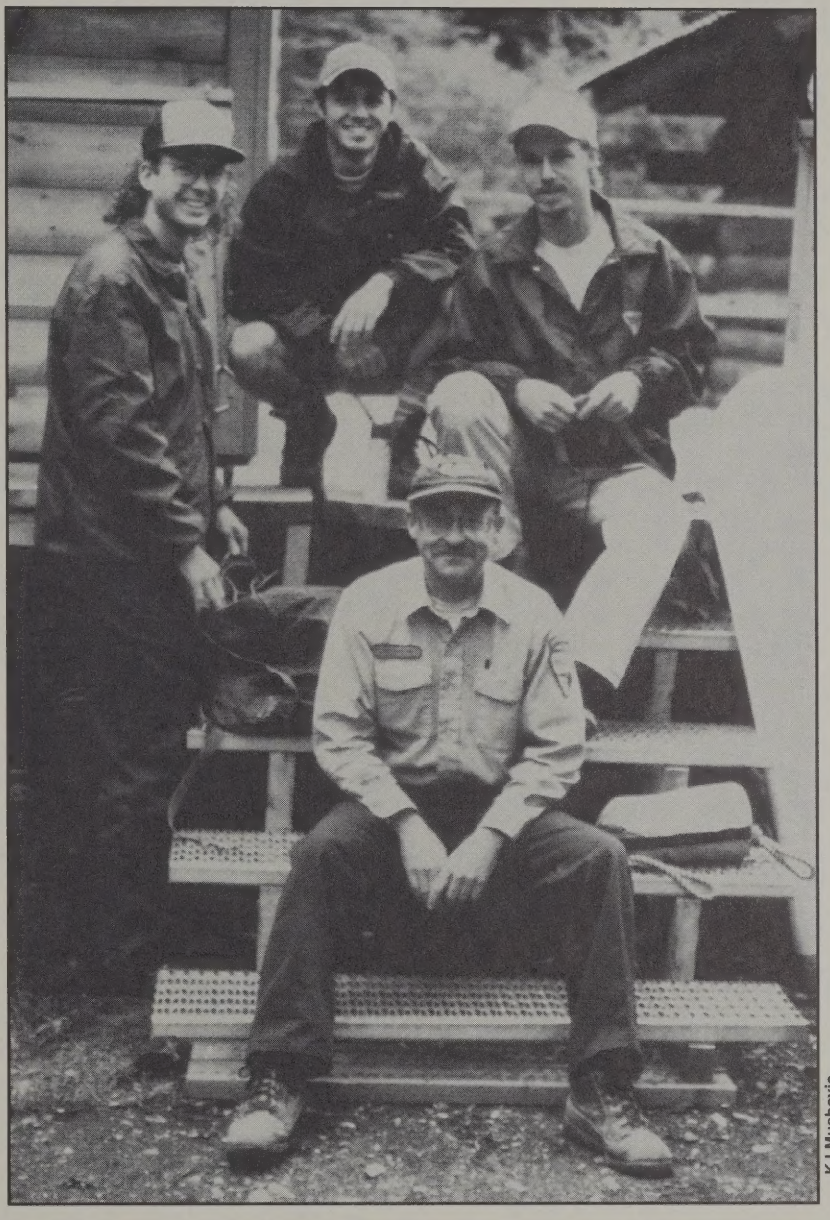
Westermeyer brought a "pig rig" satchel—short for piggy back rig—which provides a four to one mechanical advantage. Geiger and Seifert ferried a BLM raft upstream to the site, supporting the retrieval operation.

Coulter used a metal figure eight, which can be used like a grappling hook, and snagged the raft's throw bag line. Once the overturned raft was near the shore and secure, Geiger jumped on it and cut the snagged line, allowing the raft to be uprighted. The raft was then lined downriver to the takeout area. The rafters lost only minimal equipment and were grateful for the help. An additional mishap struck one member of the party, who slipped at the takeout below the falls, dislocating his knee. Seifert provided first aid supplies to the injured rafter.

The crew's presence there was reassuring to dozens of other river users who successfully navigated through or portaged around the falls. "It's my opinion that the Glennallen District should send a Swiftwater Rescue crew to Canyon Rapids each year," observes Westermeyer.

It is a unique customer service that the Glennallen District hopes to continue to provide.

—KJ Mushovic/Jon Coulter and John Geiger



KJ Mushovic

The Glennallen crew assisted rafters on the Gulkana River during the Fourth of July weekend. Shown clockwise from the bottom are veteran seasonal outdoor recreation planners Joe Westermeyer and Brad Siefert, and Student Conservation Association volunteers John Geiger and Jon "JC" Coulter.

frontier flashes

On August 31, members of the Glennallen District assisted in a search and rescue for an overdue hunter, who had lost his way while hunting.

Law enforcement ranger Joe Morris was the first person to contact the hunter's partner, near the Haggard Creek trail head on the Richardson Highway. The hunter had been last seen the previous evening, and had been exposed to overnight temperatures in the upper 30s, heavy rain and high winds. He was believed to be without food or survival gear.

By mid-morning, the Alaska State Troopers activated a search and rescue operation. BLM's Ed Wieliczkiewicz responded with the Copper River Search and Rescue, a local organization he helped form this summer. An Incident Command Post was set up, and Morris and realty specialist David Mushovic, both familiar with the area, provided information used to initiate a ground search.

At about 5:15 p.m., the overdue hunter was located by a Civil Air Patrol plane approximately 6 miles from where he had last been seen. A helicopter on contract to the Alaska Fire Service was employed to pick up the cold, tired hunter. Alaska Fire Service personnel trained as Emergency Medical Technicians were on board, while Mushovic acted as liaison for the pilot.

The hunter was recovered in satisfactory condition. "This guy was lucky," reports Ranger Morris. "Another rain-soaked, windy night like the one we had, and I'm not sure he'd have made it."

▼

The BLM made direct payments of $10.3 million to Alaska in 1994, whle investing another $70.3 million in services to the state.

The BLM receives revenue from a variety of activities on the public lands in Alaska, including fees from recreation, mineral extraction, and timber sales. In 1994, revenue from Alaska totaled $7.8 million, which was shared with the State. Direct financial transfers to Alaska included $4.9 million under the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program which compensates local governments for lost property taxes.

The BLM also funds programs that benefit Alaska through a wide variety of services on public lands in the state including firefighting, mineral leasing and the upkeep of recreational facilities.

The U.S. Forest Service filed two applications to return approximately 8.94 acres of public lands to the Tongass National Forest.

The Fish Creek Parcel contains approximately 5 acres located 80 miles northeast of Ketchikan, while the Farragut Bay Parcel is made up of 3.94 acres located 80 miles east of Sitka.

Because the two parcels had been occupied earlier for homesite purposes, they were excluded from the Tongass National Forest. Homesite entries were never conveyed, however, and the proposed withdrawal restores these lands to national forest status.

▼

The long awaited ground breaking for the Campbell Creek Environmental Education Center occurred in August at the BLM's Anchorage District Office. The BLM hosted a reception and ground breaking where partners and supporters celebrated the beginning of the construction of the 11,000-square foot facility. The center is to be completed in the fall of 1996.

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